



**Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Southern District of Texas**

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FIVE BROTHERS CHARGED WITH DRUG TRAFFICKING

McALLEN, TX – Francisco Meza-Rojas, 41, of McAllen, Texas, and four of his brothers were indicted for their alleged roles in a drug trafficking organization involved in smuggling, transporting and the storing of large quantities of cocaine and marijuana for other drug trafficking organizations, which in turn distributed the drugs in the United States. The indictment is the result of a long term multi-agency Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) investigation dubbed Operation Egret.

United States Attorney Don DeGabrielle today announced the arrest of Francisco Meza-Rojas, also known as El Ocho and Chacho, the alleged leader of the organization, on Wednesday, April 19, 2006. His four brothers, Ruben Meza, 40, also known as El Pajaro, Juan Antonio Meza, 35, Jesus Lorenzo Meza, 32, also known as Lencho, and Miguel Hernandez-Rojas, 45, also known as Mike, all of Mission, Texas, were also arrested yesterday. All of these defendants are presently in federal custody and have made their initial appearance in federal court before a United States Magistrate Judge. A hearing on the motion of the United States to hold these men in federal custody, without bond, pending the trial of this case is set for Monday, April 24, 2006, at 9:00 a.m.

The nine-count indictment, which was returned under seal on November 22, 2005, was unsealed as to Meza-Rojas, his brothers, and several others but remains sealed in part by order of the court.

According to the indictment, an individual identified only as "El Aguila" contracted with the Meza Drug Trafficking Organization to smuggle controlled substances into the United States from Mexico and to transport the controlled substances to safe locations for delivery to other drug trafficking organizations. Also charged in the indictment is Jorge Enrique Macias-Nevarez, a resident of Mexico, identified in the indictment as a Mexican smuggler who coordinates the movement of the controlled substances across the Rio Grande River. The loads of cocaine and marijuana were typically smuggled into the United States in a rural area south of Mission, Texas, between Granjeno and Penitas.

In addition to Meza and his brothers, Jose Moncerrat-Narvaez, 41, also known as Monce, Arturo Hinojosa, 24, also known as Toluco, and Robert Lee Rodriguez, 27, also known as Pica, all of Mission, Texas, and the surrounding area, have been arrested and are expected to appear before a United States Magistrate. The United States will be requesting that all of the

individuals also be held in federal custody without bond pending trial.

The indictment accuses all of the above named defendants of conspiring to import into the United States and to possess with intent to distribute more than five kilograms of cocaine and more than 1000 kilograms of marijuana over a seven year period beginning around July 1998. If convicted of the conspiracy offenses, the defendants each face a mandatory minimum punishment of ten (10) years up to life imprisonment, without parole, and a \$4 million fine.

In the remaining eight counts of the indictment, Francisco Meza-Rojas and various others are also accused of possessing with intent to distribute hundreds of kilograms of marijuana on eight separate instances between June 2001 through November 2003. The alleged marijuana loads varied in size from approximately 271 kilograms in January 2001 to as large as 1485 kilograms in October 2003.

The indictment is a result of an Organized Crime and Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) investigation conducted by federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies including the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS), Customs and Border Protection (CBP), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Internal Revenue Service-Criminal Investigation (IRS-CI), Mission Police Department, McAllen Police Department, Weslaco Police Department, Pharr Police Department, San Juan Police Department, the Starr County District Attorney's Office, the Hidalgo County Sheriff's Office, the United States Marshal's Service, and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). The criminal case will be prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Toni Trevino.

An indictment is an accusation of criminal conduct, not evidence. Defendants are presumed innocent unless and until convicted through due process of law.

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